



## United States Mission to the OSCE

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# Statement on Anti-Semitism

Delivered by Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (USA),  
Vice President, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly  
at the Anti-Semitism Conference in Vienna  
June 19, 2003

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

Mr. Moderator, Ambassadors, Fellow Parliamentarians, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am very honored to participate in this event today, the first ever stand-alone OSCE meeting on the issue of anti-Semitism. We are gathered not to discuss the history of events from the last century, but rather to consider how participating States can protect this century from contamination by the virus of anti-Semitism. Events in Europe last spring and summer made it painfully clear that anti-Semitism is alive and well. I ask everyone gathered here, then, what can we do to promote tolerance?

Foremost, governments can play a three-fold role in combating anti-Semitic bigotry, as well as in nurturing tolerance. Elected leaders must forthrightly denounce acts of anti-Semitism, so as to avoid the perception of silent support. The politics of hate, against Jews or any other race or religion, have no place in the 21st century.

In fact, in a matter of days, both houses of the United States Congress will be on record denouncing anti-Semitism. The joint resolution introduced in the House of Representatives by my colleague and friend, Chris Smith, and in the Senate by Ben Nighthorse Campbell declares, "that the sharp escalation of anti-Semitic violence within many participating States of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is of profound concern and efforts should be undertaken to prevent future occurrences."

Other legislative bodies like the German Bundestag, and Parliaments of Canada, Belgium, and France have worked towards similar goals, and I encourage all countries to consider parallel actions.

Law enforcement is the next piece of the puzzle for fighting intolerance. Rapid police response and vigorous prosecutions will make clear the determination of authorities to quell these malicious acts. For example, last summer, France experienced a particularly high rate of anti-Semitic attacks. In response, the government was not idle, but rather engaged the issue on all fronts, visibly providing increased security around synagogues and other Jewish cultural sites, and passing legislation to enhance their ability to fight the alarming trend. Let me take this

opportunity to commend the French government for its response and promote their approach to fighting anti-Semitism as a model for others to emulate.

However, public denunciations and spirited law enforcement, while essential components to any strategy to combat anti-Semitism, must work in tandem with education. If we are to see the growth of tolerance in our societies, all governments should promote the creation of educational efforts to counter anti-Semitic stereotypes and attitudes among younger people and to increase Holocaust awareness programs.

In the United States, the 50 individual states, not the federal government, are primarily responsible for education policy. I'm proud to report that most of the states have created Social Studies standards, where teaching of the Holocaust is either explicitly required or implicitly identified in all standards.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, a federal agency mandated by Congress, has also assumed a leadership role in teaching about the Holocaust. In addition to creating educational materials, the Museum offers a wide variety of professional development programs for educators. Through these efforts, I believe that we are making a difference.

I also encourage participating States to work with non-governmental organizations and civil society to promote tolerance and education. The Anti-Defamation League, for example, is one of the premiere NGOs in the United States, and has been fighting anti-Semitism, bigotry, and extremism for more than 90 years. Its work of collecting data on hate crimes and anti-Semitic occurrences is an invaluable tool and supplements similar undertakings by local and federal authorities. For sure, information is critical for any attempt to combat anti-Semitism and intolerance.

The OSCE also plays a unique leadership role in promoting tolerance towards Jews, as it was the first international organization to publicly condemn anti-Semitism through provisions of the 1990 Copenhagen Concluding Document. Today's meeting is seminal, allowing all participating States to discuss strategies to fight anti-Semitism and promote tolerance. In addition to the annual review meeting in Warsaw, I welcome focused meetings like this and the September meeting, which will address issues facing Muslims in Europe. The work of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, too, is of great value, as he intervenes into situations where intolerance could potentially lead to violence.

Through the Organization and its Parliamentary Assembly, I have been working with the Moderator, Mr. Weisskirchen, and other parliamentarians committed to combating anti-Semitism and promoting tolerance. As one of the Assembly Vice Presidents, I have seen first hand how the forum provides a visible platform for parliamentarians from throughout the 55-country OSCE region to vocally denounce the intolerant and bigoted acts of anti-Semitism.

One of our significant successes came at the July 2002 OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Berlin, where we secured the unanimous approval of a resolution offered by the U.S. delegation which denounced anti-Semitic violence and agreed that proactive approaches by parliaments and governments are essential to countering anti-Semitism. Furthermore, at next month's Rotterdam Parliamentary Assembly meeting, the U.S. delegation will introduce a second resolution on anti-Semitism, urging parliamentarians to "strongly and publicly condemn anti-Semitic acts when they occur." I hope it will be unanimously accepted.

Mr. Moderator, in closing, while I am very pleased that we are here to discuss the problem of anti-Semitism, we all must rise to the challenge before us today. Governments and parliaments play an indispensable role in promoting tolerance and fighting violent acts. Working in union in these areas, I believe, one day, we will be able to declare victory over this ancient foe.

Thank you.